



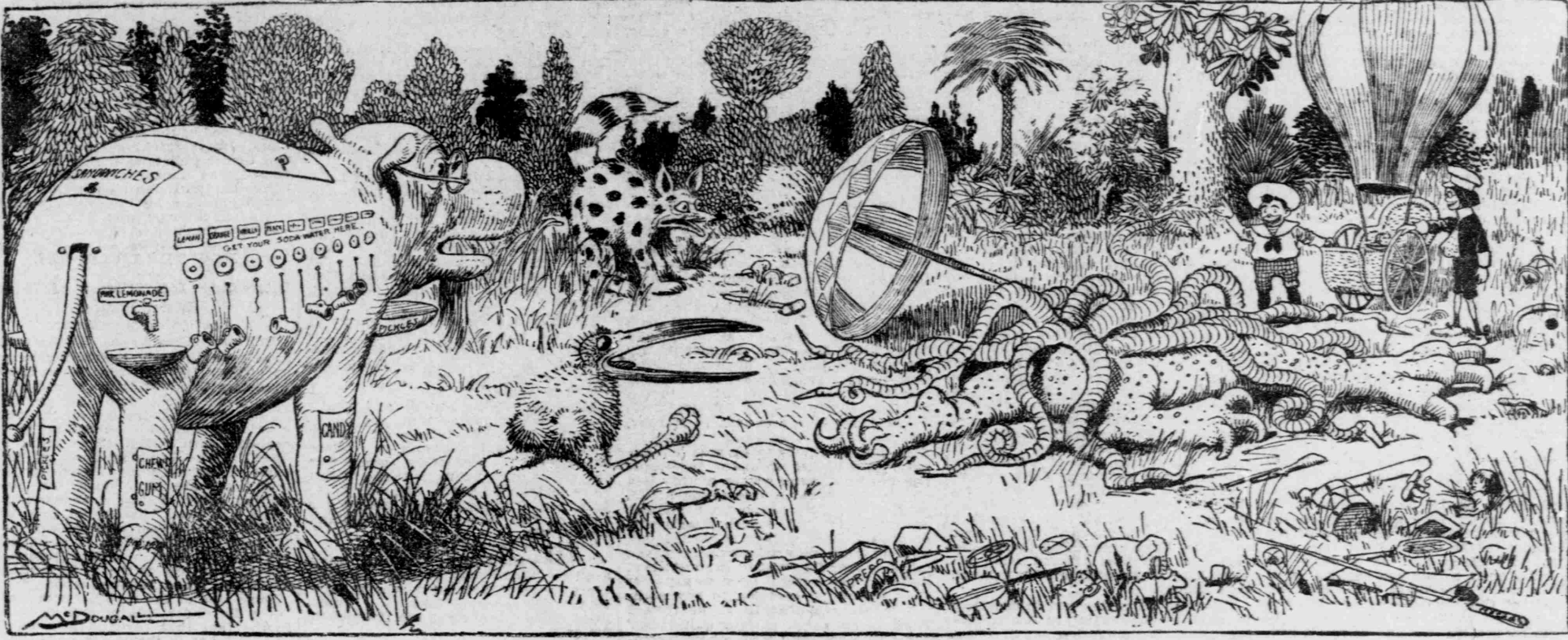
GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN

By Walt McDougall



TWO BRAVE BOYS SUBDUED THE FIERCE DELICATESSEN

This Veracious Tale Also Reveals the Methods by Which the Rambillicus Was Discovered by Marmaduke Hoover and Shorty Fortesque



And Now All Good Children Owe a Debt of Profound Gratitude to the Destroyer of the Worst Enemy They Had in the Wide World

EVERYBODY who has read these stories (and I think every really nice boy and girl has read them all ever since they began) will remember the Rambillicus, the Benevolent Rambillicus, who exists for nothing else than to do good to poor children. Perhaps some have forgotten him, so for their benefit I will say that he is an animal who dwells in the depths of the Blissful Forest, not far from town, however, whose whole body is just one beautiful layout of good things. Hanging from his sides are numerous silver cups, each one under a spout from which pours any kind of lovely drink you desire and on his back are all sorts of toys, a merry-go-round, games; in fact, you could not mention any sort of pleasure or amusement that the Rambillicus does not furnish to the poor child whom he finds, or who has the great luck to find him. Even bad children, when by accident, as sometimes happens, they come across him, are just as well treated by him and go home as good as you can imagine, for they are so happy with him that all their badness seems to leave them. Inside of the Rambillicus, reached through a door in his side, are all sorts of things to eat, from ice cream to plum pudding, every kind of nut and candy beyond counting. Even his great mouth is full of pie, crullers and cookies, and I don't think there's a part of him that doesn't yield a lot of dainties or delights. When a child finds him everything is at his disposal, just as if he owned the Rambillicus entirely, and the supply never fails, no matter how many children come.

Now I am going to tell you how two boys discovered the Rambillicus, and how they overcame a dreadful animal called the Delicatessen, who had despoiled the Benevolent one of all the children's fine toys and other good things.

WHO THESE BRAVE BOYS WERE

Marmaduke Adair Hoover was one of these boys. He was a very sickly lad, whose legs were so weak that he couldn't walk but a few steps at a time, and had to be pushed around in a wheel chair. He never played any of the games that all other boys enjoyed; the best he could do was to sit and look on, and he was glad to be able to do that, as most days he was in bed. The other boy was named Shorty Fortesque, and everybody said he was a bad boy because he broke windows, robbed birds' nests and smoked cigarettes and fought with other boys upon each and every occasion that presented itself. Yet, bad as he was, he had a good heart and he was so sorry for Marmaduke that, instead of leaving him alone as the others did, he used to wheel him around for hours. In fact, all that Marmaduke ever had seen of the fields and woodlands was what he had observed when Shorty pushed the chair, for there was no one else willing to do it. In return Marmaduke, who had read many books, told great stories to Shorty, which the latter thought repaid him for the slight trouble of wheeling the sickly boy about.

One day, not long after the Fourth of July, as Shorty was lying in the grass beside Marmaduke in the shade of a great chestnut tree, far in the woods, and Marmaduke was thinking of getting out of his chair and taking a few steps, something rustled in the bushes near them.

"Sh— What's that?" whispered Shorty; "I'll bet it's a rabbit."

"Maybe it's a snake," said Marmaduke, feeling glad that he hadn't got out.

Shorty crawled into the bushes and in a moment Marmaduke heard him shout: "Gee! A balloon! A buster, too!"

Soon he appeared carrying in his arms a great paper balloon, the biggest they had ever seen, for it was fifteen feet in length when Shorty spread it out on the grass.

"It's all right, too," said Shorty, after he had examined it carefully; "Not a hole in it, and there is a bully sponge fast to it! If we had some alcohol we could soak the sponge and we could send it up right now!"

"I've got a bottle of alcohol under the seat of the chair," said Marmaduke. "They use it to rub my legs when they get lumps on them."

He had hardly spoken when Shorty had the bottle out and was pouring alcohol on the big sponge that hung in a wire ring beneath the balloon. Then he lighted it, for, as he smoked cigarettes, he always had matches, and Marmaduke was so excited that he stood up in his chair. Shorty told him to help hold the balloon straight, so that the hot air would go up into it, and Marmaduke grasped the sides. It was made of red, white and blue paper, and as it filled with hot air it swelled out and looked fine. Soon it stood up and then it towered over their heads. It began to sway in the slight wind and Shorty cried: "Gee! It will get away before we're ready!"

He passed the strap of Marmaduke's chair around the iron wire ring and that held the balloon down until it was filled with the heated air, when it tugged so hard on the chair that it began to rise from the ground.

"Hey!" cried Marmaduke; "I'm going up!" He was about to scramble out when Shorty sprang on the chair to hold it down. It came back to earth quick enough, but in a few minutes the balloon was so filled with air that it suddenly shot right up with both of them.

They were too scared to say anything for a few minutes as they shot way above the trees and then sailed along toward the mountains.

"Hold on tight," said Shorty. "The air will get cool pretty soon and then we will come down again just as gently as a hen-hawk; see if we don't; so you needn't be scared."

"I ain't scared at all," replied Marmaduke. "It's fine."

Instead of coming down as soon as they expected, however, the balloon kept on soaring, and when it reached the mountains it sailed right over the top of them and then kept on farther.

"It looks as if it never was going to stop," said Marmaduke. "We're getting an awful ways from home. I don't see how we're going to get back again."

"Where do you suppose we are?" asked Shorty. "You know more about geography than I do, Marmy."

"I don't know," replied the sickly boy; "but I think we've gone an awful ways. Maybe we're in Africa."

"We'd see elephants and monkeys if we were in Africa, I guess," said Shorty.

"Well, I see something down there that looks like an elephant or a hippopotamus," exclaimed Marmaduke.

Shorty looked, and sure enough, below them but still far ahead, was an animal at the edge of a deep forest that was certainly like a hippopotamus, but even at that distance they could see the door in its side and the silver cups hanging in rows from its neck to its tail. Just then the balloon began to sink gradually and it was quite plain that it would soon land them right beside the strange animal. As it descended they began to worry, for they didn't know what they would do if the animal went for them. Suddenly Marmaduke cried out joyfully: "Oh, I know what it is! It's the Benevolent Rambillicus!"

"How do you know?" asked Shorty, feeling, however, much relieved.

"I've read all about him and I've got a picture of him at home," answered Marmaduke. "Oh, we are mighty lucky." He then told Shorty quickly all about the Rambillicus, and by the time the balloon sank to the ground he was well prepared to greet the benevolent creature, but as they both walked up to the animal they were amazed to see that it was shedding great tears that fell upon the ground in heavy splashes. It did not look at them until Marmaduke spoke and asked:

"Dear Mr. Rambillicus, pray what is the matter?"

"Oh, I am in sore distress and affliction," groaned the Rambillicus. "All is lost! Everything swept away, and who will care for the children for the rest of the summer?"

The boys now noticed that many of the drinking cups were battered, others were wrecked off and were lying on the ground and through the open door they could see the inside of the animal swept clean of all the games, toys and dainties of which Marmaduke had told Shorty Fortesque. There was nothing left at all to entertain the children nor to feed them either.

"What did it?" asked Shorty. "Was it a cyclone?"

"The dreadful Delicatessen did it, just now," replied the Rambillicus. "I didn't know he was in this neighborhood at all. The Skeewink, who has always before this warned me in time to escape, never gave me a hint that the thing was near until it pounced on me and tore away everything I had. It even ripped off the merry-go-round and the drinking cups, as you see."

"What sort of a beast is this Delicatessen?" asked Shorty, glancing about him.

"Oh, a fearsome thing!" replied the Rambillicus, wiping his eyes. "It is enormous, being far larger than I am, and it has a dozen big trunks, somewhat like the elephant's, only they have sharp spikes on their ends, and they rise out of his back. With these trunks it can seize anything that comes along and dash it to the ground or tear it apart, and it has a tremendous mouth, several feet wide. If it gets you once it's good-bye to you, I tell you. Why, even the horrible roars of the Delicatessen are enough to frighten one to death, I assure you. I am trembling still, and my poor ears ring yet with the din. I am all of a perspiration."

"Yes, I can see that you are," said Marmaduke sympathetically. "I wish we could help you."

"Oh, what could two feeble boys do against the Delicatessen?" cried the Rambillicus. "He would devour you in a minute."

"Why do they call him by such a funny name?" asked Shorty.

"Because, for all of his twelve tremendous spiked trunks and his great mouth, he has on his back a big red eye, his only eye, and all around this eye his flesh is so extraordinarily delicate and tender that the slightest touch upon it would kill him instantly. That's why all of his trunks are placed on his back around this delicate danger spot in order to protect it. I'd never know about it if the Kiwi bird had not informed me one day but when he attacked me to-day I never thought of it."

MISSED A CHANCE FOR A KNOCKOUT

"That's a pity," said Shorty, "for if you had just given him a good whack on that spot while he was rummaging around among the toys and pies and cakes you might have knocked him out."

"I am afraid he would have been too quick for me, and beside, if I had made him angry he might have killed me, and what would the poor children do then? I can get more toys and things somewhere later this summer, but there never will be another Rambillicus, let me tell you."

The poor, afflicted animal began to weep bitterly again.

"Brace up, old fellow," said Marmaduke consolingly. "If there's any boy can help you out it's Shorty Fortesque." Marmaduke certainly believed this, for Shorty was really and truly a hero to him.

"Oh, come; I don't say I can do anything. I can only try, you know," said Shorty.

"I am afraid to let you try, for I know the dreadful power of the Delicatessen, and I know you wouldn't last a minute in his clutches, I assure you."

"We'll try to keep out of his clutches," said Shorty. "You just dry your tears and perk up while we sneak into the bushes. I wish he had left a couple of drinks of sarsaparilla behind, for I'm awful thirsty."

"Perhaps he did, I don't know," replied Rambillicus. "If you pump my tail up and down a few times—that's the way to do it, you know—you may find some left in the sarsaparilla fountain here on the right side."

Shorty began to pump, and to his delight there was almost a whole gallon of ice-cold sarsaparilla, and they all had a drink, after which Rambillicus said he felt much better already.

"You lie down and take a rest," said Marmaduke, "while we reconnoiter the land." The Rambillicus sank into a mossy bed beneath a tall coconut tree, and the boys strolled away, but in a few minutes they met another strange animal, which Marmaduke at once recognized as the Skeewink, that queer creature

like a gigantic raccoon, which acts as agent for Rambillicus and discovers poor and worthy children for him to treat to good things every summer.

"Ha! have you heard the news, boys?" said the Skeewink, as he approached. "Poor Ramm is cleaned out and hasn't a pretzel left."

"Yes, we know it, and we're looking for the Delicatessen now."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the Skeewink, startled; "why he'll eat you in a jiffy!"

"If we give him a chance; but we won't. He's so full of pie I'll bet by this time that he can't move," said Shorty.

"Well, perhaps that's so," said the Skeewink, thoughtfully.

"He's sitting over yonder behind the caramel bushes with the umbrella cover of the merry-go-round over his head to keep the sun from striking his tender spot, and he hasn't moved for more than an hour. I've been watching him."

Shorty hurried away, followed as fast as possible by Marmaduke. Soon they came to the caramel bushes, and peeping through them they saw the awful thing sitting, as the Skeewink had said, with the umbrella over his back and his trunks holding all sorts of prizes, pies, cakes, fruit, drums, hats, ping-pong racquets, trumpets, guns, whistles, magic lanterns, sail boats, hoops, dolls, boxes of candy, cream puffs—everything you could think of, so that he looked like a regular Christmas tree just ready for the youngsters, but alas for the youngsters who would have been foolish enough to approach to take anything from that terrible tree. The ground all about him was covered with toys of every kind for yards, and fragments of goodies littered all the wood for a half mile, showing that he had eaten an awful lot and then wasted as much more. Shorty grew quite enraged when he saw the awful waste of good things, and his breath came in gasps as he clenched his fists, but the Delicatessen was entirely too gigantic for any boy to tackle, and that he saw immediately. He took Marmaduke's hand and they stole back to the Rambillicus, whom they found fast asleep with a great tear standing, ready to fall, on each dear old eyelid.

Shorty gripped his teeth as he said:

"Gosh! I wish I could do something to that Delicatessen!"

HOW THEY CONQUERED THE DELICATESSEN

"Well, can't you?" asked Marmaduke.

"Why, how on earth can a boy tackle such a monster as that?" cried Shorty. "What do you think I am? A giant?"

"It isn't a question of strength," said Marmaduke, "but of brains. Of course we are too small to go for him and fight him like the whalers tackle the largest whale, but that soft, tender spot on his back seems to me to offer an opportunity. All we have to do is to hit him with something there, for you know Rambillicus said the least blow there would be fatal. Now, how are we to land on that spot?"

After thinking awhile Marmaduke shouted in glee: "I have it! I surely have it! We've got old Delicatessen!"

"What is it?" cried Shorty.

"The balloon. Have we any more alcohol?" asked Marmaduke.

Shorty ran to the chair which lay underneath the balloon, just as it had fallen, and held up the bottle. "It's half full yet!" he shouted.

"Then that's the end of the Delicatessen! Here's where we knock him out!" said Marmaduke. "Soak the sponge and be ready to sail. Do you see that big iron spike on the ground over yonder?"

"Yes," said Shorty. "Do you expect to kill him with that?"

"That's exactly what I want to do. Bring it to the chair and put it in."

Shorty now began to get an idea of what Marmaduke wished to do, and he brought the spike, after which they lighted the alcohol on the sponge as before, and in a few minutes the chair began to rise. Then, before the balloon was completely filled with heated air they moved it, chair and all, away around to windward of the place when the Delicatessen was resting under the merry-go-round umbrella, so that they would sail right over him.

As they began to sail away Rambillicus awoke and saw them.

"Oh, are you going?" he cried. "I am sorry! I thought you would stay awhile and try to help me out by gathering up some of the things."

He ran along beneath them and looked up at them piteously.

"We are coming right back," shouted Marmaduke. "We are going to finish up old Delicatessen and then we'll stay with you as long as you wish. Please go and lie down or else you will put him on his guard and we will not be able to do a thing to him."

"All right," shouted Rambillicus, for they were now away up in the air. "Come right back as soon as you are done."

The gentle breeze carried them along slowly and soon they saw the legs of the Delicatessen sticking out from under the umbrella. Then the grandeur of Marmaduke's plan struck Shorty all of a heap, for he realized that the awful creature could not see them coming in the balloon, although if they had approached on the ground he would have discovered them instantly and have been on his guard at once. The monster was sprawled out in the grass with no thought of danger, gorged with pie, cake and candy and almost asleep. The balloon approached and it seemed as if even the elements were in league with the lads, for the breeze ceased to blow just as they reached the spot and the balloon poised itself exactly above the Delicatessen. He never moved, for he was unconscious of his danger, but from the wintergreen lozenge tree, off to the left, came a loud, weird chuckle. This was uttered by the Kiwi bird, who was watching and saw what was going to happen to the Delicatessen, and who could not control his glee. The noise made the Delicatessen look around, but he never moved the umbrella nor directed his gaze upward, and the Kiwi, in alarm, choked himself with his claw for fear he would laugh right out and warn the beast.

Just when they hung exactly over the great red, white and

blue merry-go-round umbrella, Marmaduke Hoover poised the big iron spike between his thumb and finger for a moment and then dropped it. It shot down like a bullet, pierced the umbrella and vanished from the view of the boys, but they knew instantly that it had fallen true. All the great horrid trunks of the Delicatessen began to twist and writhe, his legs shot out, he clawed the ground with his claws, the umbrella was hurled far away, and the most awful howls and growls filled the woods. They saw at once that the great red eye of the monster had been smashed, and nothing but a big hole showed in the centre of the tender spot. He hurled toys, pies and crullers for hundreds of feet around as he struggled in his dying agonies, and tore up such enormous holes in the earth that the boys realized what would have happened to them if they had fallen into his clutches. He bellowed so loudly that toward the last the Rambillicus heard him far in the distance and trembled, for he thought that the boys had fallen victims to their daring. The Kiwi bird, however, unable to control himself longer, hurried to Rambillicus as fast as he could run (for you know he has no wings), uttering wild shrieks of joy, and related what had happened.

"What," cried Rambillicus, opening his eyes wide with amazement, "do you mean to say that those two little boys, with no other weapon than an iron spike, have destroyed that gigantic, terrible and measly Delicatessen?"

"They certainly have," chuckled the Kiwi bird, dancing in glee. "He is as dead as a door nail by this time, for he has stopped howling and that is a sure sign."

"Let us hurry to them at once," cried Rambillicus, his face brightening. The Kiwi led him quickly to the spot where lay the now dead monster. The balloon was just settling gently to the ground a few feet away from the gigantic carcass and the boys sprang out at the same moment Rambillicus arrived.

"He is certainly dead!" exclaimed dear old Rambillicus. "I can scarcely believe my eyes. Who would have thought it possible?"

"He-he" chuckled the Kiwi; "they are the smartest boys that ever came to the forest."

"Dear, dear, what a hideous thing he is," said Rambillicus; "how glad I am to be rid of him, and it's a great comfort that he was the only one in all the world." He walked around and examined the horrid sprawling body.

"We had to make a hole in the merry-go-round cover when we speared him," said Marmaduke, "but it could not be helped."

"Oh, that is easily mended," laughed the Rambillicus; "we can patch that up in no time."

The Skeewink then appeared and was dumfounded. He pranced around clumsily and began to shout.

"See the toys; see the games; see the pies and cake. Why, we can save lots of them!" he cried, joyfully.

"Yes," said Rambillicus, as he looked over the grass, "he has not done as much damage as I expected. Let us get to work at once and gather them up."

It did not take long for the Skeewink and Rambillicus to recover all the games, toys and good things which the Delicatessen had spared. They found the merry-go-round undamaged in the Hoker-poker bushes, and the toboggan slide, in good condition, lay beside the lemonade brook, and only one of the swings was missing. The principal damage, after all, had been done among the tables, and now that his alarm was over, Rambillicus realized how easily he could procure a new supply of everything. When everything had been restored to its proper place, dear old Benevolent Rambillicus moved off grandly with a cheerful countenance, and with the boys on his back and the Skeewink prancing in advance, marched to the Perennial Picnic Grounds.

THE HAUNTS OF THE RAMBILICUS

The Perennial Picnic Grounds, in the Blissful Forest, have been described before, and every child knows that here is where the Rambillicus welcomes poor children who live in the hot, dirty, stuffy city streets, and sick children who never see green fields at all, and here they have every possible good thing that is known to Rambillicus. Sick children get well in a jiffy there, and lame and feeble ones soon go skipping around as lively as the strongest, while all the strong and healthy ones want no better fun than to help them. You never hear of any mean and nasty actions in the Perennial Picnic Grounds, for it is impossible there. A child can't be mean where dear old Benevolent Rambillicus is boss, I tell you. No, indeed!

In a few days Shorty was surprised to find that lame and feeble Marmaduke was running quite as fast as he was, and in a little while that he could throw a ball as far and as hard as any one there and jump as high as a fence when it came to swimming there was hardly a boy in the woods who could beat him. In two weeks he was as strong as any boy ever was, except freak boys, who, of course, are wonders anyway. He was as strong as Shorty, and that was enough for Marmaduke; and, strange to say, in that wonderful place Shorty forgot all about cigarette smoking. He was really cured of the habit without knowing it, and nobody but Rambillicus can tell you how it was done. I wish all cigarette smokers, both young and old, could go there at once and take the Rambillicus cure. At the end of the summer the boys were shown the way home by the Skeewink, who still admired them immensely, and they left Rambillicus, not, however, without getting a promise from him to come and visit them in the winter. I shall have a great story to tell you about that, too, some time in the future.

You may imagine, for I can scarce tell you, of the joy and excitement that the return of the wanderers created at their home, where they had long been given up for lost, and when the Hoover family saw the once weak and sickly Marmaduke they did not at first believe it was their boy until Shorty assured them. And the best of it was that he stayed just as strong and well as he was on his return forever after, until he got into politics and became an Alderman, when he sometimes had attacks of indigestion.

WALT McDOUGALL